



PLAYS, SINGS, TALKS, LIKE A THING OF LIFE.

## The Wonder Double-Bell Talking Machine.

Two distinct, nickel-plated brass bells, like a band instrument—instead of a tin horn—producing the sweetest, clearest tone and double the volume of sound of others.

**The Wonder Talking Machine is not a Toy.** Is simple, compact, dust-proof, durable. Mechanically perfect. Volume enough to fill the largest auditorium, yet can be adapted to any parlor. Indestructible records, made by a new process. A whole entertainment in itself.

**Price, \$18.** Best, yet costs least.

Money returned if not satisfactory. Invented and manufactured by **C. G. CONN**, maker of the celebrated Wonder Solo Cornets, etc. *Agents wanted everywhere.* Send for descriptive catalogue.

### MANDOLINS and VIOLINS

made by **C. G. Conn**, have the same superior degree of excellence that characterizes his famous band instruments. Unrivalled in tone-quality, scientifically constructed from carefully selected material, guaranteed superior to all others. Used by professionals everywhere.

*...Send for catalogue and prices...*

**C. G. CONN, Manufacturer of Musical Instruments,**  
Elkhart, Indiana, and

23 E. 14th St., New York City.

**Fig. 1:** The "Wonder" — earlier 1898 ads cite a \$20. selling price and a 34 E. 14th Street NYC address. This double-horned configuration by Conn originally planned a gear-driven pivot for the horn support. The single-horn 'Wonder' used a feed-screw mounted on the top of the cabinet (see p. 8).

## *From Berliner to Burt:*

### American Graphophone's Initial Forays Into the Disc Record Market

by George Paul



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### DEAR APM:

**Question:** I have found a horn for a cylinder phonograph which is made of transparent blue celluloid, is 24" long, has a nickelled bell 10¼" in diameter, and weighs 8 oz. It has a worn gold decal on the side with the barely legible words "Made Exclusively for the Columbia Phonograph Co.", so I looked it up in the *Hazelcorn Horn Chart*, but it was not listed. What do you make of this?

**N.L., Spokane, WA**

**Answer:** This interesting horn was invented by George Hogan in 1899 (pat. #632,015) and was sold as an attachment for the Q-type Graphophone. In its first configuration, it did away with the reproducer and was sold by the American Micrograph Co. of NYC as *The Hogan Micrograph Attachment*. It came in two sizes - 24" (\$3.) and 28" (\$5.). By June of 1900, they sold all their rights to the Columbia Co., at which point, the odd stylus arrangement was abandoned and the horn was equipped with a standard ferule. Only one example is known and it is designed as a collapsible horn, the celluloid "snapping" into the collar of the bell. Its main advantage was the light weight which would not tip over the small Q Graphophone or require a crane on larger models.

## FEDERAL BUDGET CUTS CAST SHADOW ON EDISON ARCHIVES

The National Park Service has announced severe restrictions in services and tours at the Edison National Historic Site because of new legislation mandating across the board rollbacks in U.S. funding. Among the first areas to feel the pinch is the famed Edison Glenmont home, a gift to his second wife Mina Miller. This beautiful building is in serious need of restoration and is now off-limits to visiting Edison fans. The number of days that the Site itself is open to the public has also been restricted - until this year, the Site was open on a daily basis, but the Monday and Tuesday tours have been discontinued, and there is a distinct possibility that, after Memorial Day, Wednesday and Thursday tours will cease too. Thousands of school children were accustomed to viewing the Site's vast treasures under the "Technology for Children" program, but it now looks as if this program will also go under the ax. The supreme irony of course is that 1987 is the 100th anniversary of Edison's move to West Orange, NJ, and it is this year that the Site faces a massive 20% budget cut from its already reduced 1986 amount of \$848,000. Document preservation and organization will also be curtailed. Perhaps if enough collectors write to their representatives in Washington (and even make tax-deductible donations to the Site), many of the worthwhile programs will be able to survive! □

**EDISON NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE, MAIN STREET at LAKESIDE AVENUE, W. ORANGE, NJ 07052**



# *Columbia's Entry Into the Disc Record Market*

by George Paul

This article was originally intended to illustrate the part played in the history of disc recordings by the Burt Company of Milburn, NJ. Very little has appeared in print regarding this small but important company. However, as any serious student of the subject is aware, the period from 1897-1902 is a tangled web of intrigue, litigation, brief flurries of production, and cross purposes which make an isolated study of the Burt Co. very difficult. In order to understand what happened during that time, and how the Burt Company contributed, a much broader overview is necessary (see acknowledgment). Therefore, this article will attempt to describe and illustrate the events and disc products of the 1897-1902 period by following one thread which eventually ties the web together: The American Graphophone Co. and its sales agent, The Columbia Phonograph Company.

In early 1898, the Berliner Gramophone Co. and its sales agent, Frank Seaman's National Gramophone Co., were selling the only disc talking machine line available (not counting the short-lived finger-wind United States Talking Machine Co. of Muskegon, Mich. -1897). The "Trademark" model had been on the market for several months and, for the first time, the disc was being considered serious competition for the more familiar cylinder record. More and more Gramophones and little 7-inch discs began appearing in parlors across America. The disc business was becoming more and more lucrative, and this potential source of revenue had not gone unnoticed by the Graphophone Co.

The year before, a former Berliner employee, Joseph W. Jones, had applied for a patent on a new style of Gramophone, one which used a mechanical feed. This would circumvent the basic 1895 Berliner patent which controlled any mechanism whose reproducer was propelled solely by the record grooves. In addition, Jones began experiments with recordings made in wax. This was an area protected by the Bell and Tainter patents held by American Graphophone. Jones was clearly a potential threat to both companies.

In November of 1897, young Jones took an auspicious step and signed a formal agreement with a New York investor, Albert

T. Armstrong. Jones agreed to license his mechanical-feed Gramophone to Armstrong (as Berliner had to Seaman) and to supply serviceable disc records as described in his patent application for recording in wax, and another application for pantograph copying of disc records. Armed with this contract, Armstrong found partners in the persons of C.G. Conn of Elkhart, Indiana (a prominent maker of musical instruments) and Emory Foster of Washington, D.C. Conn contributed his design of a two-horn or double-belled reproducer. Jones would furnish the machines and Conn would manufacture the two-horned assembly. The machine was appropriately called the *Wonder*. It was the first serious (spring-wind) gramophone offered to the public which was not a Berliner product (fig. 1). When the Jones mechanical-feed machine patent was granted in early 1898, the business was incorporated as The Standard Talking Machine Co.

Manufacturing difficulties soon arose. Jones could not supply satisfactory machines or records in sufficient numbers or quality. Consequently, Armstrong found himself selling goods at a discount as 'seconds' or 'imperfects'. Armstrong later estimated that not more than 50 sample machines were distributed. In June, 1898, the Berliner Co. brought suit for patent infringement, Jones' application for recordings in wax was rejected for the second time, and Armstrong et al disbanded the Standard Talking Machine Co. The *Wonder*, hardly sprouted, was swept into oblivion by the winds of litigation. Interestingly, the promoters never *formally* dissolved the Standard Talking Machine Co., so it remained in a "phantom" existence until it was dissolved in the mid-1920's, along with several other such "phantoms", by proclamation of the Governor of New York.

Armstrong and Jones needed patent protection if they were to resume their manufacturing activities. At the same time, the Graphophone Co. was seeking a way to break into the disc business. Our thread begins during September-October of 1898 when an arrangement was made between them whereby American Graphophone would manufacture disc machines and pay a royalty under the Jones machine patent. Jones would again attempt to supply records, this time under the protection of the Graphophone



# American Talking Machine Co.

MANUFACTURERS OF THE

**NEW VITAPHONE** 20th CENTURY Disk Talking Machine

**Only \$15.00 Complete**

**With 12 Assorted New Process Red Disk Records**



**Write for Discounts to Agents and Dealers**

**106 WALL STREET**

**CABLE ADDRESS,**

**TWINEAST NEW YORK**

**NEW YORK**

**A. B. C., LIEBER' HUNTINGS AND PRIVATE CODE USED**

## PATENT WARNING

Our goods are made under patents and protection of the American Graphophone Co., who have over two million dollars invested and are the largest manufacturers of Talking Machines, Records and Supplies in the world. This company own all the basic patents pertaining to the Talking Machine Art, and have won every legal decision in suits against infringers on final hearing. Suits are now pending against the Gramophone Co. and other manufacturers and dealers in Talking Machines of the disk type similar to ours, the United States Courts having already enjoined, on final hearing, other machines using the infringing features of the Gramophone. Dealers will be fully protected in handling our product, and it is the intention of the American Graphophone Co. to sue dealers who are handling infringing machines at an early date.

**Fig. 2:** The above ad appeared in the November 1899 issue of *The Phonoscope*. However, in the same issue, the National Gramophone Corp. issued the following admonitory statement:

### A WORD TO THE WISE IS SUFFICIENT

We wish to give a word of warning to our friends who may be solicited to purchase the Vitaphone, or the red, flat disc records, manufactured by the American Talking Machine Company, or the Stylophone marketed by the New England Stylophone Company. These machines are undoubted infringements of the Gramophone. All persons who buy or handle infringing mer-

chandise are liable for damages just as is the manufacturer. We therefore wish to say that we shall be obliged, in self-defence, to take suitable action immediately, looking toward a suit being entered against any one who is found to be handling the products of either the American Talking Machine Company or the New England Stylophone Company.



recording patents, while awaiting favorable action on his wax disc recording patent application.

But American Graphophone encountered its own manufacturing difficulties in producing a disc talking machine. By mid-1899, Armstrong had been forced to arrange for separate manufacture of machines with the International Stylophone Co. of New Haven, Conn. The resultant machine was called the *Vitaphone* (fig. 2). Protected by the Graphophone Co. patents, the *Vitaphone* represented the first real alternative to the Berliner Gramophone. J.W. Jones was finally supplying records in the form of "Red Process" records. These were imprinted "American Talking Machine Record Disc", and were made of a dull brick-red colored material (fig. 3).

The Graphophone interests were not yet manufacturing a disc product, but were receiving a royalty from Armstrong for their recording patent protection. This situation was obviously not what the company had in mind. Accordingly, Columbia marketed a "Toy" disc Graphophone for the Christmas trade of 1899 (fig. 4), undoubtedly using the tools prepared under Armstrong's license. This machine, the first Disc Graphophone, was supplied with vertically-cut 5-inch wax discs. These records were certainly covered under the Bell-Tainter patents, but presumably as an added legal precaution, the records were designed to play from the inside outward. Despite its low selling price (first \$3.00, then \$1.50), this first Disc Graphophone was not a commercial success; few survive today. The monopoly which Berliner held in the disc business seemed unassailable.

All was not well, however, in the Berliner camp. Frank Seaman had long been dissatisfied with his treatment by the Berliner Co. In order to maintain and increase demand for the *Trademark* Berliner Gramophone, Seaman felt it was necessary to lower the price of the machine. Berliner charged Seaman cost plus a 40% markup on each machine. Apparently Seaman had no quarrel with the 40% markup the Berliner Co. took, but he felt that the supplier (Eldridge Johnson) could cut his cost of manufacture, and thus reduce the 40% markup as well. In 1897, Seaman had pressured Berliner to convince Johnson to cut his price. In line with Seaman's suspicions, several officers of the Berliner Co. were financing Johnson. The company president, Thomas Parvin, owned a share in the Johnson

patents. Clearly, if Seaman were to have a less-expensive machine to market, it would not be the *Trademark*. Thus taking advantage of Section 8 of his contract with Berliner<sup>1</sup>, Seaman arranged for production of a different model Berliner Gramophone with Levi P. Montross (see APM, Vol. VIII, no. 1, p.1; this was the Type II). This was the only instance in which such an arrangement was allowed. Some 2000 were built, after which the Berliner/Johnson interests refused to honor Seaman's right to arrange outside manufacture. Despite Seaman's repeated protests regarding price and quality of goods, the Berliner Co. remained immovable.

It was during this period that Seaman arranged (in addition to the Montross machine), sample record pressings by the [Geo.] Burt Co. of Milburn, NJ, a manufacturer of billiard balls and poker chips. These pressings were less costly, and owing to the Burt "recipe", higher quality than the Duranoid pressings Berliner was using. Nevertheless, the Berliner Co. was again adamant: no change in suppliers of records would be considered<sup>2</sup>. Frank Seaman and his business manager Orville LaDow were losing patience.

In early 1898, about the time J.W. Jones was issued his patent for the mechanical-feed *Wonder*, Seaman incorporated a new company - the Universal Talking Machine Co., with LaDow as president. This concern was purported to be involved in the conversion of Gramophones to coin-operated instruments, and a few have turned up. At the same time, however, Universal began shipments of *Trademark* Berliner Gramophones marked "Zon-O-Phone" to Belgium, which was not subject to patent protection. These machines had a small celluloid plate over the Berliner decal. This was only a temporary operation. Seaman and LaDow must have foreseen eventual secession from Berliner. Accordingly, while the Berliner Co. was filing suit against the Standard Talking Machine Co.'s *Wonder*, the Universal Talking Machine Co. hired the patentee of a music box spring-motor, Louis P. Valiquet, to design a new Gramophone (his original patent date of Dec. 13, 1898 appears on early Zonophone celluloid plates); and a chemist with considerable recording and record-making experience by the name of John C. English. Seaman's contract with Berliner specifically forbade disc record production.

In March of 1899, Seaman chartered a new firm to eventually replace his original National Gramophone Company. This new





**Fig. 3:** A Red-Process Vitaphone Record: American Talking Machine Record Disk, Made in the USA, 'March from Rice's Ragtime Opera,' Mandolin & Guitar, [#] 1800.



**No. 170,215—Toy Graphophone.**  
**Five Extra Sets of Disc Records for the Toy Graphophone.**  
 Different selections in each set chosen because of their popularity with children. **Price of Extra Disc Records, 50c per set of five. One set is included at price of \$1.50.**

**SET NO. 1.**  
 "The Graphophone," ...Talking  
 Dixie, .....Piano  
 Animal and Bird Imitations.  
 Song of Six Penns.....Song  
 Mocking Bird.....Whistling

**SET NO. 2.**  
 Home, Sweet Home...Whistling  
 La Marseillaise.....Band  
 The Girl I Left Behind.....  
 .....Drum, Fife and Bugle  
 Blue Bells of Scotland....Cornet  
 Robin Adair.....Xylophone

**SET NO. 3.**  
 Die Wacht Am Rhein.....Band  
 Suwanee River.....Xylophone  
 Garry Owen.....Cornet  
 Semper Fidelis.....  
 .....Drum, Fife and Bugle  
 Honeymoon March.....Band

**SET NO. 4.**  
 Yankee Doodle.....Band  
 Red, White and Blue....Cornet  
 Mary and the Lamb....Talking  
 There was a Little Man...Song  
 Sweet Bye and Bye....Whistling

**SET NO. 5.**  
 Old King Cole.....Talking  
 Yankee Doodle.....Whistling  
 America .....Band  
 The Day is Past.....Song  
 Wearing of the Green....Cornet

**Fig. 4:** A mail-order advertisement from ca. Jan. 1900. These vertically-cut wax discs came in sets of five and started their selections at the center!



**Fig. 5:** "Two holes are better than one!" A Zonophone-modified Berliner record (ca. 1900).



**Fig. 6:** A "pirated" Zonophone disc obviously made from a Berliner record (ca. 1900).



firm had increased capitalization and a broader charter than before, and was known as the National Gramophone Corporation. This new business structure would enable Seaman to weather the stormy waters which lay ahead.

By mid-1899, while Albert T. Armstrong was launching the *Vitaphone*, Universal was ready to produce a machine (the Zonophone) under the patents of Louis Valiquet. In order to insure a supply of records for it, Seaman had his workers drilling additional holes to accommodate the retractable pin in the Zonophone turntable<sup>3</sup> (see APM, Vol. V, No. 6, p. 2; also fig's. 5 & 6).

In the Fall of 1899, with his bets suitably hedged, Seaman made one last attempt to secure the Berliner Co.'s order for the Zonophone, supplied by Universal, under the same terms as they ordered from Johnson. The Zonophone's lower cost and higher quality could not overcome the Berliner group's covert financial ties with Johnson. Seaman was warned not to handle any infringing goods. Presumably, Frank Seaman's patience had reached its limit.

Meanwhile, having backed two "dark horses" and an unsuccessful toy disc phonograph, the Graphophone interests must have been impatient as well. By late March of 1900, these two impatient forces had found each other. The alliance of National Gramophone Corp.-Universal Talking Machine-American Graphophone Co. caused immediate explosive results (fig. 7). Albert Armstrong, financial backer of the American Talking Machine Co., makers of the *Vitaphone* and the "Red Process" disc records, received a letter dated April 12, 1900 from the Graphophone Co. stating that it:

*... had decided to grant an exclusive license for machines of the Gramophone type to the Universal Talking Machine Co. . . . This arrangement will not preclude your continuance in the manufacture of records, if it be advantageous to do so...*

Armstrong, now deprived of the Graphophone Co.'s support for a disc gramophone, was anxious not to lose control of his disc record manufacturing as well. His would-be protection, the Jones application, seemed interminably mired in the U.S. Patent Office. In a probable state of panic, Armstrong appealed to Phillip Mauro, the Graphophone Co.'s legal counsel, to expedite favorable action on the Jones application. It was completely re-written, only to be refused again.

On May 5, 1900, Seaman dropped a bomb-

shell, enabling the Graphophone Company to close down Berliner's Gramophone and record sales (except in the District of Columbia) by accepting a consent decree admitting the infringement of the Bell-Tainter patents by Berliner. In addition, a permanent injunction was granted prohibiting National Gramophone Corp. from dealing in Berliner Gramophones. This action effectively made the Zonophone the only Gramophone which could be legally sold in America. Seaman had, for the moment, switched his allegiance and permitted the Graphophone Co. to become licensors of his promising disc machine, the Zonophone.

At the same time, recognizing the potential value of the Jones patent application, the Graphophone Co. and Phillip Mauro exerted tremendous effort to obtain a favorable action from the Patent Office. Claims were repeatedly re-written as the application was rejected and returned. Berliner, aware of this activity, sought a similar patent solely to protect his interests from the Graphophone Co. On April 17, 1901, no doubt to the consternation of the Graphophone interests, the Jones application was placed in interference with that of Emile Berliner.

The patent interference with Berliner was the second piece of bad news for the Graphophone Co. In March, the Universal Talking Machine Co. lost their chief record maker, John C. English, to the Burt Co. Within a short time, the Burt Co. was able to produce a satisfactory disc record known as the "Climax". A new subsidiary company was formed by Burt to handle all recording activities: the Globe Record Co. In such an unstable legal climate, the division would presumably protect the Burt Co. from recoverable damages beyond the assets of Globe.

Meanwhile, Eldridge Johnson had, over the preceding nine months, built up a respectable business through sales of his existing stock and newly-designed machines. His recording procedure was based in wax, for which he had no patent protection. The Jones application was, no doubt, a major concern to Johnson.

The flurry of legal activities and advertising repercussions in this period created uncertainty on the part of dealers and customers regarding the Zonophone. National Gramophone Corp., financially drained and experiencing disappointing sales, applied for a voluntary dissolution in September of 1901. Deprived of its sales agent, the Univer-



# The Wonder Talking Machine

# The VITAPHONE Talking Machine

THE STANDARD TALKING MACHINE CO.

**HOW TO USE IT**

NEW YORK	•	•
CHICAGO	•	•
DETROIT	•	•
ELKHART, IND.	•	
WORCESTER, MASS.		
TORONTO, CANADA		

THE AMERICAN TALKING MACHINE CO.

**HOW TO USE IT**

106 WALL STREET  
NEW YORK

Cable Address  
Twineast, New York

Telephone  
1825 John

## 12 THE WONDER.

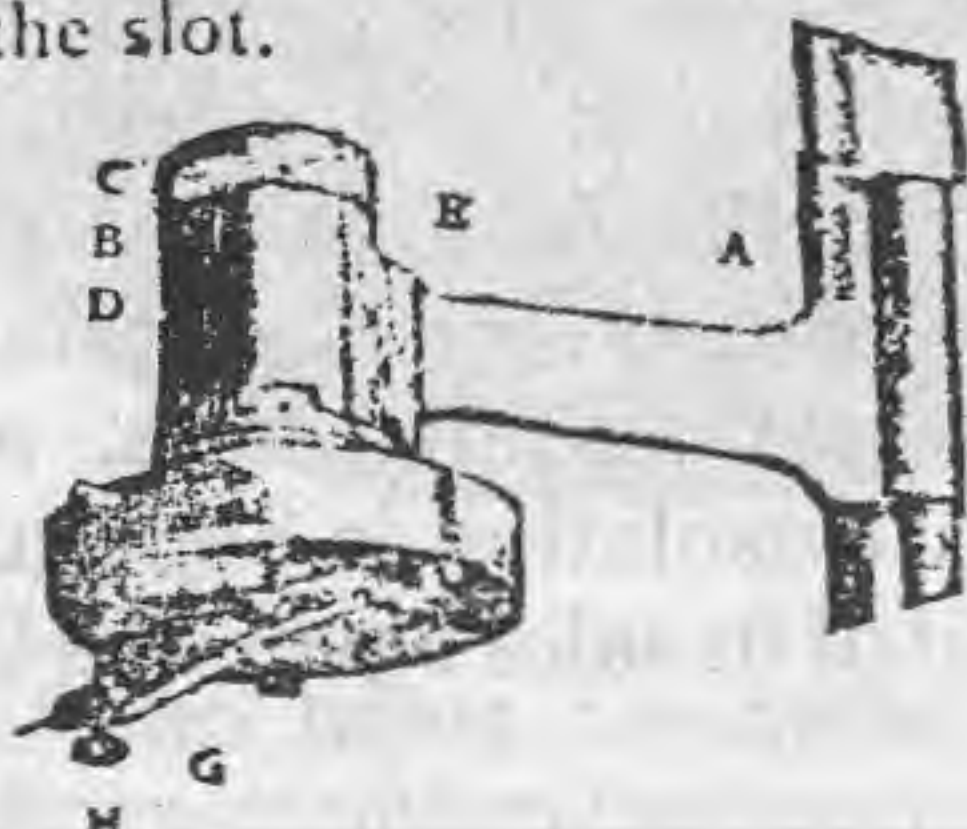
It is a very simple matter to put the parts together. The front of the machine is that on which the feed is located. The operator should stand facing the back of the motor, and adjust the transmitter as shown in Figure 2.



FIG. 2.

Its position is fixed exactly by the pin, which slips into the slot cut in the metal arm called the transmitter holder. The end of the spiral wire spring, which regulates the downward pressure of the transmitter, is next adjusted by forcing it into the tiny hole just back of the slot.

FIG. 3.



## THE WONDER.

13

Figure 3 shows a top view of transmitter and method of adjustment.

- a. Transmitter holder, showing factory number.
- b. Pin on shank of transmitter.
- c. Slot on transmitter holder.
- d. Spiral spring regulating downward pressure.
- e. Hole into which end of spring fits.
- g. Stylus arm.
- h. Stylus clamp screw
- i. Stylus, adjusted.

THE HORN is next placed in position as shown in Figure 4. It rests lightly on a rubber cushion on the upper bar of the feed. By snapping an elastic band from the transmitter arm around the horn it is kept in place securely.



FIG. 4.



sal Talking Machine Co. was forced into a sale of assets. Universal and the Zonophone would soon re-emerge, but for the redoubtable Frank Seaman, the talking machine business was over.

These events were not as catastrophic for the Graphophone Co. as they would seem. National Gramophone and Universal were becoming excess baggage to a growing organization such as the Graphophone Companies with their increased sales network and manufacturing facilities. Perhaps not so coincidentally, the Graphophone Co. found that the interference with Berliner was proceeding favorably. Encouraged, the Graphophone management moved to invest in the Jones application. Phillip Mauro had dealt directly with Jones and had taken out an option under his own name. Albert T. Armstrong, the long-suffering benefactor of the Jones application, was not informed of these maneuvers. Additionally, in the numerous revisions and rewritten claims, Armstrong's name had disappeared!

The Graphophone Co., having made the necessary arrangements with the Burt Co., was now prepared to handle the new Climax records supplied by the Globe Record Company (fig. 8).

In October 1901, a new firm was organized to coordinate the Berliner-Johnson interests. It was called the Victor Talking Machine Co. The Graphophone Co., smelling a victory in the air, introduced their own Columbia Disc Graphophone, replete with paper-labeled Climax Records to play on it. Despite obvious infringements of Berliner and Johnson patents, the Graphophone Co. felt secure that the Jones application was their "ace in the hole" by which their disc competition would be eliminated. On Dec. 10, 1901, the Jones Patent was finally issued!

The lines were now drawn for a legal battle the likes of which would eclipse the struggles of 1900. To a young corporation like Victor, such a course could ruin the company. Eldridge Johnson and his sales manager Leon Douglass were unwilling to take that risk. Somehow they were made aware of problems between the Burt Co. and the Graphophone Co. Several visits with the Burt Co. management resulted in Johnson and Douglass acquiring the Globe Record Co. for \$10,000 (in the absence of Edward Easton, Columbia's president). Additionally, Burt would collect any unpaid bills due Globe from American Graphophone, and the Burt Co. would receive a lucrative press-

ing contract from Victor. In one decisive move, the tables had been turned on the Graphophone Co.

Globe's matrices were immediately shipped to Victor facilities in Philadelphia where they were marked "VTM" (fig. 9). The Graphophone Co. was thus deprived of its only source of records for its new machines and any legal action on their part would involve the Federal jurisdictions of Eastern Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Southern New York.

When Edward Easton returned, he began negotiations at once. By mid-February, it had been arranged that American Graphophone would take possession of Globe for the \$10,000 Johnson and Douglass had paid for it. Victor, in its turn, had secured an agreement from the Graphophone Companies to drop all impending suits against Victor and the Gramophone interests.

The Graphophone Co. was now firmly in the disc talking machine business, and Victor was, for the time being, safe from the Graphophone Co. patents, including the almost-stillborn but now formidable Jones Patent.

Without the existence of the Burt Co. and its manufacturing arm, the Globe Record Co., the history of disc records might well have been substantially altered. The Graphophone Co. would have developed a disc record eventually, but only after considerable expenditures of time and money. The Victor Talking Machine Co., however, might not have survived the massive litigation which the Graphophone Co. was preparing to unleash, had not Globe been available as a bargaining chip.<sup>5</sup>

This coup by Johnson and Douglass must have been a 'bitter pill' for the Graphophone Co. to swallow. Accordingly, to forestall any future complications, the Burt Co. was purchased by American Graphophone and physically moved to Bridgeport, Conn. Unfortunately for them, however, they had to do so without the able services of John C. English, whom Victor had lured into their fold.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps he was Victor's "mole".

The Burt Co. actually did press records for Victor in early-mid 1902. In October 1902, Victor cancelled the arrangement because of allegedly faulty pressings. If this was indeed the case (and the Graphophone Co.'s imminent purchase of Burt makes it quite possible) surviving pressings show no indication of substandard workmanship. These pressings are recognizable by the



# Zon-o-phone

**Improved Gram-o-phone**



**Is substituted for the Gram-o-phone, which is abandoned, including its name . . . . .**

**The rights of the ZON-O-PHONE are exclusive under the joint protection of the patents of . . . . .**

NATIONAL GRAM-O-PHONE CORPORATION  
UNIVERSAL TALKING MACHINE CO.  
AMERICAN GRAPHOPHONE COMPANY  
COLUMBIA PHONOGRAPH COMPANY

which companies have made an agreement between themselves for legal protection and commercial advantage. All persons selling any style of disc machines other than that sold by these corporations, will be prosecuted.

For Sale by dealers everywhere, including the Branches  
of the Columbia Phonograph Co. throughout the world.

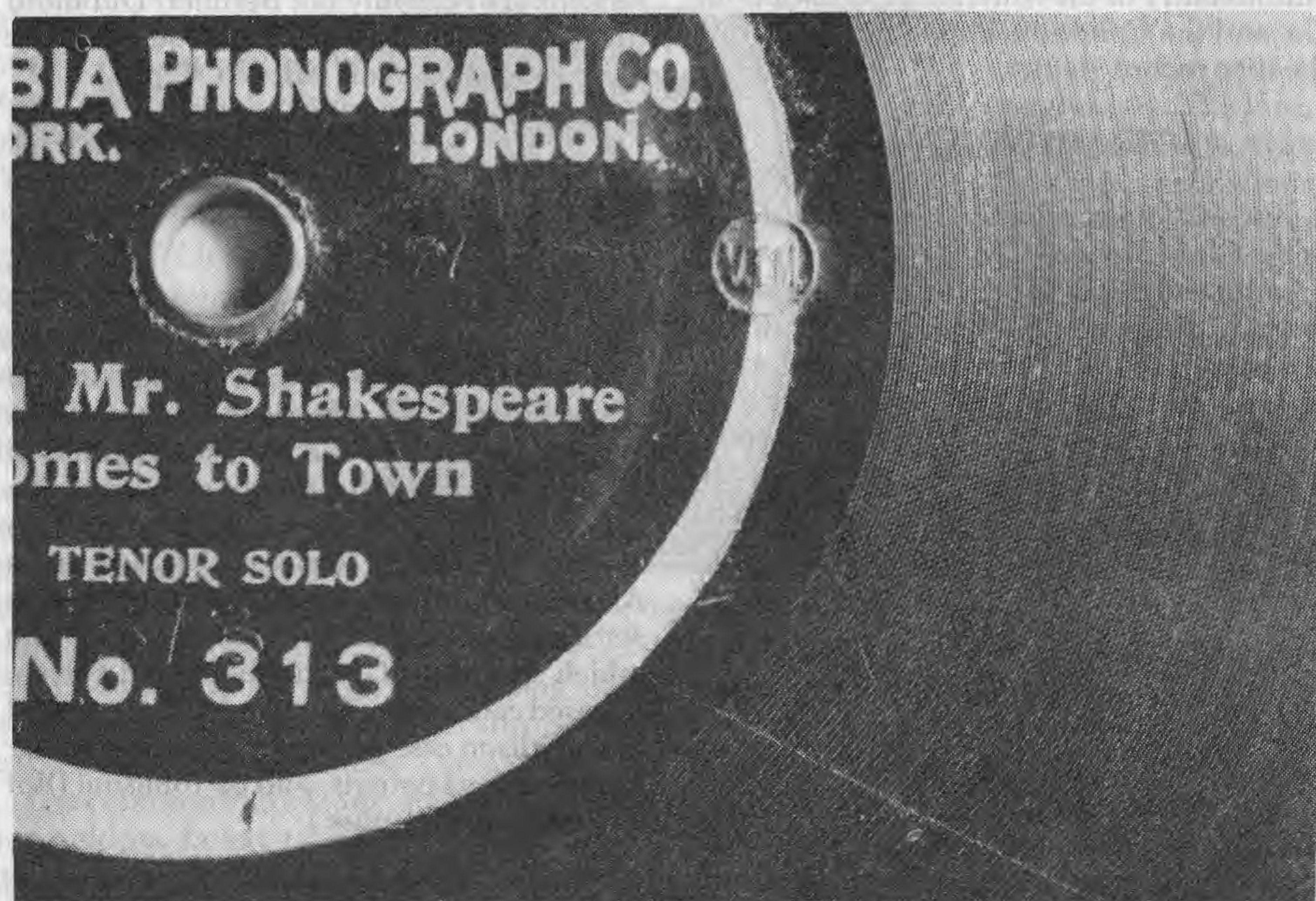
**National Gram-o-phone Corporation**  
**Broadway, Cor. 18th St., New York City**

**Fig. 7:** This 1899 ad from Cosmopolitan Magazine expressed the complicated situation in a nutshell!





**Fig. 8:** The Graphophone-backed "Climax" Record, ca. 1901, manufactured by Burt's subsidiary — the Globe Record Company (G.R. Co.) — exclusively for Columbia. These records were originally sold by Globe for a short time without the paper label. Then in late 1901, Columbia added the paper label despite the fact that Johnson controlled the patent for applying it.



**Fig. 9:** The short-lived 'VTM' marking on a Climax disc - Victor's coup was complete. (Jan.-Feb. 1902)





**Fig. 10:** An early (1902) 7" Victor Monarch Record pressed by the Burt Company of Milburn, NJ (soon relocated by Columbia to Bridgeport, CT). Note the letter 'B' at the right of the Nipper trademark design. The contract for these pressings was soon cancelled by the Victor Co. on the grounds of faulty pressings, but surviving examples seem sound enough!

presence of a "filled" Zonophone notch on the back and a tiny "B" printed on the label beneath and to the right of Nipper (fig. 10). These Burt Victors represent the last transitional repercussions of the clandestine, circuitous entry of the American Graphophone Co. and the Columbia Phonograph Co. into the disc record field.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Just as Victor probably owed its existence to the Globe Record Cp., this article owes its breadth and depth to the unpublished manuscript of Raymond R. Wile, made available through his selfless generosity. The information presented here will appear in more detailed, expanded form in a projected book on talking machine and record development by Mr. Wile covering the years 1877-1907.

## NOTES

1). Frank Seaman's contract with the Berliner Gramophone Co., Section 8: "The licensee shall have the privilege of supplying by contract to the Licensor gramophones and gramophone goods and parts for the repair thereof to fill the order of the Licensee -- *Provided* that the said gramophone, gramophone goods and parts for the repair

thereof shall be equal in quality to those supplied by the Licensor -- and *provided also* that the Licensee shall furnish the said gramophone, gramophone goods and parts for the repair thereof at at least 5 percent less than the cost at which the Licensor can manufacture them or procure them elsewhere, and that any loss or delay resulting from their not proving satisfactory or not being delivered on time shall be deemed to be the fault of the Licensee. But the manufacture of gramophones, gramophone goods and parts for the repair thereof, if undertaken by the Licensee, shall be subject to the restrictions of all contracts with the United States Gramophone Company and Emil Berliner, and under no circumstances shall the Licensee manufacture disks or records."

2). Berliner obtained the Burt formula for his foreign interests, enabling the Burt recipe to be used for English Berliner pressings. Comparison of the American and English products today further illustrates the superiority of the Burt material.

3). In addition, blank-label pressings with Berliner catalogue numbers exist with Zonophone notches on their backs. These were made by effacing the label information from Berliner records and preparing matrices from the pirated discs. The resultant records are certainly not Berliner/Duranoid pressings. Could their origin be the Burt Co.? (see APM, Vol. VII, No. 6, p. 2).

4). The rarity of Vitaphone records today would suggest that the Graphophone Co. did not consider their continued manufacture "advantageous".

5). Eldridge Johnson, fearful for Victor's future, had made an interesting proposition to the Edison Phonograph Works: should litigation with the American Graphophone Co. prove unsuccessful for Victor, Johnson wished to arrange for the manufacture of a disc machine by the EPW under protection of Edison's "shop license" obtained from American Graphophone as a result of the settlement of litigation in December 1896, in which American Graphophone and Edison licensed each other. This would have resulted in an Edison disc phonograph, made under Graphophone patents, sold by Johnson! (But it didn't come to pass.)

6). John C. English was instrumental in the development of the 1903 14" Victor Special Deluxe Records. □



## BOOK REVIEW

*Edison Diamond Disc Re-Creations — Records and Artists, 1910 - 1929*,  
by Ron Dethlefsen and Ray Wile, (180 pages), APM Press, 1985

Review by George Blacker

When I first heard of this book, I wondered whether it would prove redundant for any discographical library by duplicating Ray Wile's *Edison Disc Recordings*. Fortunately, it does not. Rather, it is a most welcome complement to it, and I'll even go so far as to say that if you already have *EDR*, you should most decidedly get this one. If you have neither, get both. One reason I recommend having both books is that this newest one contains a complete artists' list-

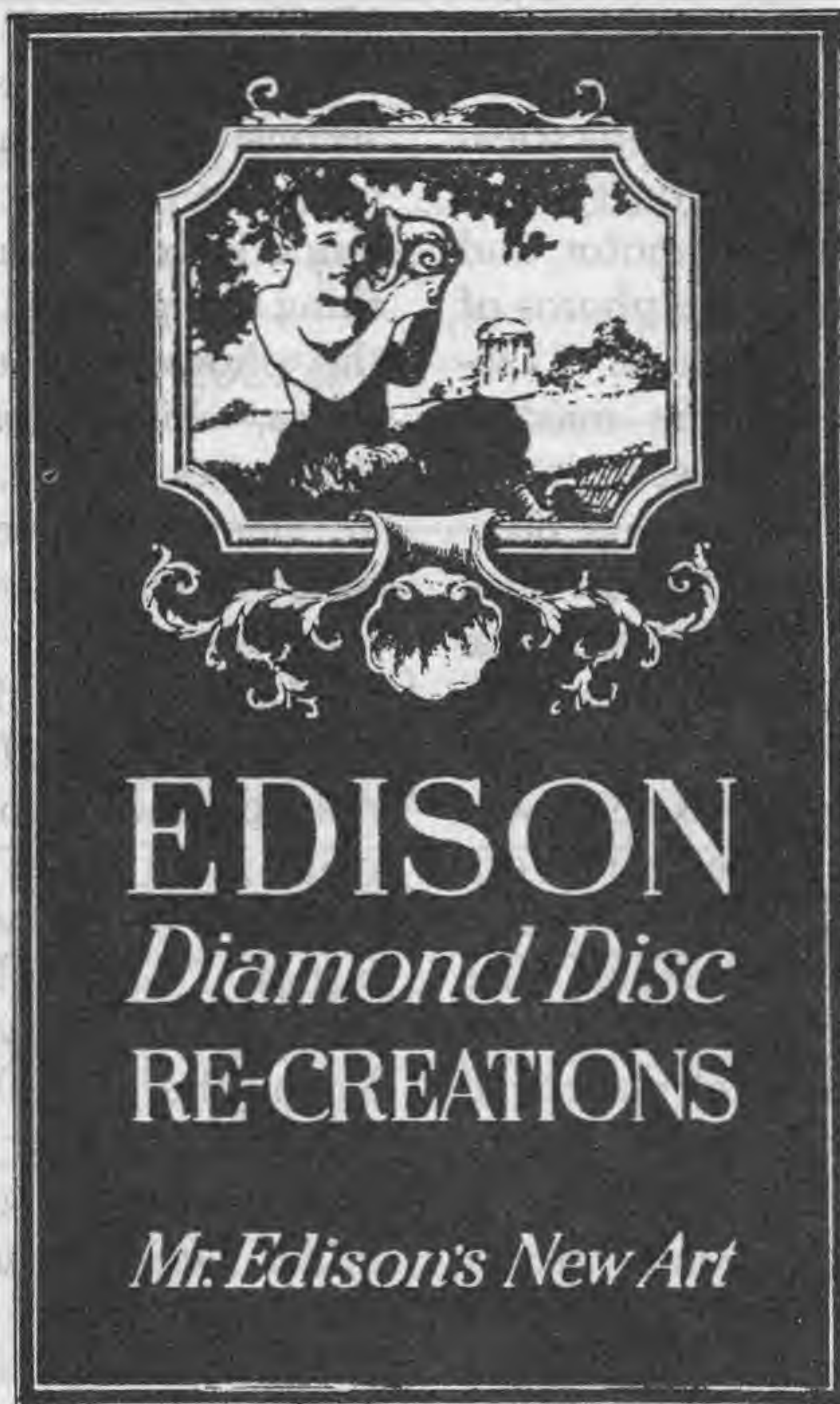
ing, with references to every record by that artist, including some which were assigned couplings and catalog numbers but never released. This alone makes *EDAR* an invaluable companion work to the Wile compilation. Its value is further enhanced by an exhaustive list of the pseudonyms used by many Edison artists; to take just one small example, did you know that Walter Scanlon (a/k/a van Bryant) recorded twice simply as "Van"? It was news to me! Want more? You've got it, in the form of a master dating chart which makes it possible to establish the *recording* date of any given master on Edison with an error not in excess of a month or so at most. This is not always a definite indication of the time of *release*, as the Committee had a way of "sitting on" some masters for months, especially in the earlier days of the Diamond Discs.

It is common knowledge, surely, that Edison seldom failed to use every take of a given master, which can mean, if one wants to go that far, buying several copies of a given record to get all the issued takes; they

tended to be coupled most haphazardly. The explanation given for this has been that Edison's manufacturing process was hard on metal parts. In *EDAR*, we find out just how hard it was: each record made had to be "cooked" in the press at high temperature and under pretty high pressure for nine minutes. This compares to something like a minute or so for the average shellac or vinyl 78 record and five minutes' combined heating and cooling for a Blue Amberol. Each

Diamond Disc press made a dozen records at a time, and the total time needed to set it up, press the records, cool them, remove and inspect the records and metal parts was 20 minutes, and that was the minimum; complications might increase it! I, for one, don't wonder any longer that Edison went through metal parts like gangbusters. The foregoing also serves to explain why the paper labels were not pressed directly into the record surface: the high temperature could discolor or even *char* the paper. Hence the idea of the round blank papers to which the printed labels were cemented afterward. Too bad they couldn't have developed a better adhesive, though. . . .

The book is a feast of photographs, and I'd like here to enumerate and comment on a few of them. Some of the fancy illustrated Diamond Disc boxes are shown — in color, no less; I've seen them only once in a shop, and that was years ago. All the various designs of etched and paper labels are shown, as is an experimental paper label which may never have been used on a



FROM THE COVER



record that made it to the shops. If you've never seen either the special label of "Holiday Greetings From The Bunch At Orange" or the sleeve in which it was distributed, they're here, and again, in color.

For the technologically minded, there are reproductions of the patent documents for two models of Edison's disc cutterhead. It is interesting to note that the viscous damping fluid which played such a part in making Edison's recording system nearly free of resonant peaks in response was originally applied just at the points where the stylus-to-diaphragm coupling contacted those two parts. Disc and cylinder master cutting machines are shown in some detail. Did you know that Edison continued to use spring-powered motors on both types of recorders even after converting to electrical recording? It is also obvious to me that the disc mastering turntable displayed at the Edison Site (which, as I recall, has an electrical vertical cutterhead still mounted on it) is not complete; the spring-powered motor and large base are missing. There are photos of the famous (or should it be 'infamous'?) 125-foot horn, and a listing of the masters recorded with it. For laughs, I refer you to the photo of Edward Meeker on page 66.

For the collector who wonders how well Edison records sold, there is a statistical breakdown of total sales for several years, in which it is shown that the peak years were 1920 and 1921; Thereafter, it was all downhill, though export sales climbed while domestic sales fell off -- for a couple of years. Total combined domestic and export sales of discs were just a tad under 500,000 for 1928. At least the discs weren't all destroyed when production was discontinued; rather, remaining stocks were offered to dealers for as little as a nickel each for Diamond Discs or 15 cents each for the laterals, if one bought fifty or more of the company's choice.

I did find a couple of things with which I feel I must take issue with Messrs. Dethlefsen and Wile. The first of these is a statement by Ray Wile, on page 128, that most of the master numbers between 12057 and 17999 were not used. I cite two pieces of evidence to suggest that many numbers within that hiatus were assigned to Blue Amberol cylinder masters: (a) my copy of Blue Amberol 3230 ("Henry & Hank in Vaudeville" — Kaufman Brothers) bears a handwritten mas-

ter number in the left-hand margin: 13599-2. This is followed by 322, then by 3230-2. It looks as if the pair of "2's" following the hyphens are take numbers, as the dots on the end corroborate them. Also, (b) I cite the front cover of APM, Vol. VII, No. 2, on which a page from the Columbia St. studio dubbing log is shown for the revised version of Edison's "Let Us Not Forget" (EBAR 3756), on which two disc masters were used: Edison's speech from master 6540A followed by the National Anthem played by the N.Y. Military Band from master 3069A. The cylinder master number is shown there as 16131. Incidentally, the older version on which Edison spoke without the band used a different take of the disc master — presumably take B. I presume there may have been some assignments of blocks within the 12057-17999 area, as Wile cites masters in the 15000's for some of Edward Meeker's one-second advertising discs cut in 1929 (electrically, no doubt). I cannot account for this numerical discrepancy otherwise. The second thing that puzzled me was the caption under the photograph of the LP disc dubbing setup, which dates the photo at 1928. Since the last dubbed LP master was apparently an electrical according to Wile, I hardly think they'd have left the acoustic equipment set up that late. Wouldn't 1927 be a safer estimate of the date of that picture?

These are small points, to be sure, and don't distract in any important way from the many good things about this book. If I were asked to give a two-word review of it, I'd just say: "Get it". In fact, I just did; now it's up to you. It may be obtained from Allen Koenigsberg, at 502 East 17th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11226 or from Ron Dethlefsen at 3605 Christmas Tree Lane, Bakersfield, CA 93306. The introductory price is \$21.95 post-paid in the U.S.

A final thought: in his preface, Ron expresses the opinion that *EDAR* should be regarded as the final part of a trilogy, the other two parts of which are Ray Wile's Edison disc catalog listing and George Frow's *The Edison Diamond Disc Phonographs*. Fair enough, but I think it should be expanded into a *tetralogy*. The fourth unit should be a complete listing of Edison disc and cylinder masters, with particular emphasis on the Columbia St. studio logs. How about it, Ray and Ron? □



# PRODUCTION FIGURES FOR VICTOR TALKING MACHINES, 1902 - 1929

(Research by Allen Koenigsberg; production figures supplied by Jeff Lendaro.)

Model	Selling Price	Quantity	Years
Jr.	\$10.00 - 12.00	15,883	1909-1920
0	17.50 - 22.50	50,639	1908-1920
I	22.00 - 30.00	94,134	1902-1920
II	30.00 - 37.50	125,248	1902-1920
III	40.00 - 45.00	103,701	1902-1925
IV	50.00 - 57.50	33,055	1902-1925
V	60.00 - 67.50	50,839	1903-1920
VI	100.00 - 105.00	10,830	1904-1915
Auxetophone (Air)	500.00	500	1906-1918
XXV (Schoolhouse)	60.00 - 115.00		1913-1925
VTLA (First Victrola)	200.00	1500?	1906-1907
IV (inside)	15.00 - 25.00		1911-1926
VI (inside)	25.00 - 35.00	693,416	1911-1926
VIII	40.00 - 50.00	185,541	1911-1924
IX	50.00 - 75.00	569,393	1911-1926
X (table)	75.00 - 60.00		1910-1913
X (floor)	75.00 - 110.00		1912-1921
XI (table)	100.00		1910-1912
XI (floor)	100.00 - 150.00	1,042,906	1912-1921
XII (table)	125.00		1909-1910
XII (floor)	125.00	4,912	1909-1910
XIV	150.00 - 225.00	264,603	1910-1921
XVI	200.00 - 750.00	11,953	1907-1921
XVII	250.00 - 615.00	18,697	1916-1921
XVIII	300.00 - 400.00	4,402	1915-1916
XX	250.00 - 300.00		1908-1909



Model	Selling Price	Quantity	Years
1-1	17.50	86,720	1925-1929
1-2	18.00	22,670	1925-1929
1-4	17.50	10,856	1925-1929
1-5	35.00	24,791	1926-1929
1-6	25.00	35,391	1926-1929
1-70	50.00	3,034	1926-1929
1-90	75.00	22,347	1927-1929
2-30	25.00		1927-1928
2-35 (port.)	25.00	14,734	1929
2-55 (port.)	35.00		1929
2-60 (port.)	40.00		1927-1928
4-3 (Consolette)	85.00 - 150.00	234,322	1925-1928
4-4 (Granada)	150.00 - 215.00	90,163	1925-1928
4-5 (Colony)	110.00	19,992	1925-1926
4-7	125.00 - 180.00	64,952	1926-1928
4-20	125.00 - 135.00	36,878	1928-1929
4-40	165.00 - 220.00	93,656	1926-1928
7-1 (Alhambra I)	350.00		1925-1926
7-2 (Alhambra II)	425.00		1925-1926
7-3	325.00 - 430.00		1927-1928
7-10	275.00 - 330.00		1927-1928
7-11	250.00 - 285.00		1928
7-25	385.00 - 420.00		1927-1928
7-26	425.00 - 475.00		1928-1929
7-30	325.00 - 380.00		1926-1928
8-2	310.00	18,570	1925-1926
8-4	235.00 - 290.00		1926-1927
8-7	?		1926-1927
8-8	195.00		1928-1929



Model	Selling Price	Quantity	Years
8-9	175.00 - 230.00		1928-1929
8-12	235.00 - 290.00		1927-1928
8-30 (Credenza)	275.00 - 405.00	67,506	1925-1928
8-35	300.00 - 335.00		1928-1929
8-60	650.00		1926-1927
9-1 (Florenza)	475.00 - 605.00		1926
9-2 (Borgia II)	1000.00		1925-1926
9-3 (Borgia I)	675.00		1925-1926
9-15	600.00 - 655.00		1926-1928
9-16	750.00		1928
9-18	925.00		1928-1929
9-25	1150.00		1927-1928
9-40	1000.00		1927-1928
9-54	1350.00		1928-1929
9-55	1550.00		1927-1928
9-56	1750.00		1929
10-35	365.00		1928
10-50	600.00		1927-1928
10-51	1050.00		1927-1928
10-69	850.00		1928
10-70	1100.00		1927-1928
11-25	550.00		1928
11-50	950.00		1928
12-1 (Cromwell)	450.00	6,219	1926-1928
12-2 (Tuscany)	550.00		1926
12-15	550.00		1928
12-25	625.00		1927-1928
14-1	275.00	3,034	1926
15-1 (Hyperion)	900.00		1926-1928



Model	Selling Price	Quantity	Years
35	30.00 - 35.00		1924-1925
50	50.00		1921-1925
80	100.00 - 110.00		1921-1925
90	125.00		1921-1924
100 ('XI')	150.00	195,284	1921-1925
105	180.00	11,584	1923-1925
107	200.00 - 240.00	1,008	1925
110 ('XIV')	225.00	21,799	1921-1924
111	225.00 - 265.00	22,741	1923-1925
120 ('XVI')	225.00 - 275.00	8,424	1921-1924
125	275.00 - 365.00	2,169	1923-1925
130 ('XVII')	275.00 - 415.00		1921-1925
150	350.00	5,259	1921
210	100.00 - 110.00		1923-1925
215	150.00	136,875	1923-1925
220	200.00 - 240.00	23,245	1923-1925
230	375.00 - 480.00	3,394	1922-1925
240	115.00 - 125.00	65,820	1922-1925
260	150.00 - 160.00	53,593	1922-1925
280	200.00 - 265.00	12,729	1922-1924
300	250.00 - 315.00	27,013	1921-1925
330	350.00 - 480.00	3,619	1922-1925
350	235.00 - 275.00		1924-1925
360	235.00	1,286	1924-1925
370	275.00 - 315.00	906	1924-1925
400	250.00 - 305.00	12,862	1923-1925
405	250.00 - 305.00		1923-1925
410	300.00 - 355.00	7,358	1923-1925

There are obviously still some gaps in production information which we hope to locate.



# FROM THE GOLDEN AGE . . . 'GUINNESS' ON RECORDS & LEONCAVALLO'S PAGLIACCI

by Joe Klee

Sooner or later, it had to happen. Guinness Superlatives Ltd., the firm that publishes books of world's records on everything, has finally come out with a book of world's records on recorded sound. It's not a historical overview (see *Tinfoil to Stereo* or *The Fabulous Phonograph* if that's what you're looking for). It is a list of highlights compiled by Robert & Celia Darling with the aid of Brian Rust, published in one volume (225 pages) with copious photographs (some in color) organized rather more haphazardly than I would have wished. Included are some errors and, (even like this column), typos or outright mis-spellings. There's a lot of random information here but organized in such a way that *The Guinness Book of Recorded Sound* is more a foil for Trivial Pursuit than a tool for research.

The entirety of recorded sound before Edison, and that includes the work of Albert Magnus, Edward Leon Scott de Martinville, J.C.M. Duhamel, Thomas Young, Alexander Melville Bell, Alexander Graham Bell, Robert Hooker and Charles Cros is covered in a mere four pages of text.

More space is devoted to Edison and the cylinder. We are advised that the first recording of music was made in 1878 when cornetist Jules Levy performed *Yankee Doodle* at a public demonstration of the (tinfoil) phonograph in New York. He may also have been recorded at the opening of the Brooklyn (East River) Bridge in 1883, but unfortunately, these have not survived. What Guinness refers to as the first recordings of *serious* music were made in 1888 when the 12-year-old piano prodigy, Josef Hofmann, made some 2 minute cylinders for Edison. Would that we knew what selections Hofmann recorded on that occasion. Would that

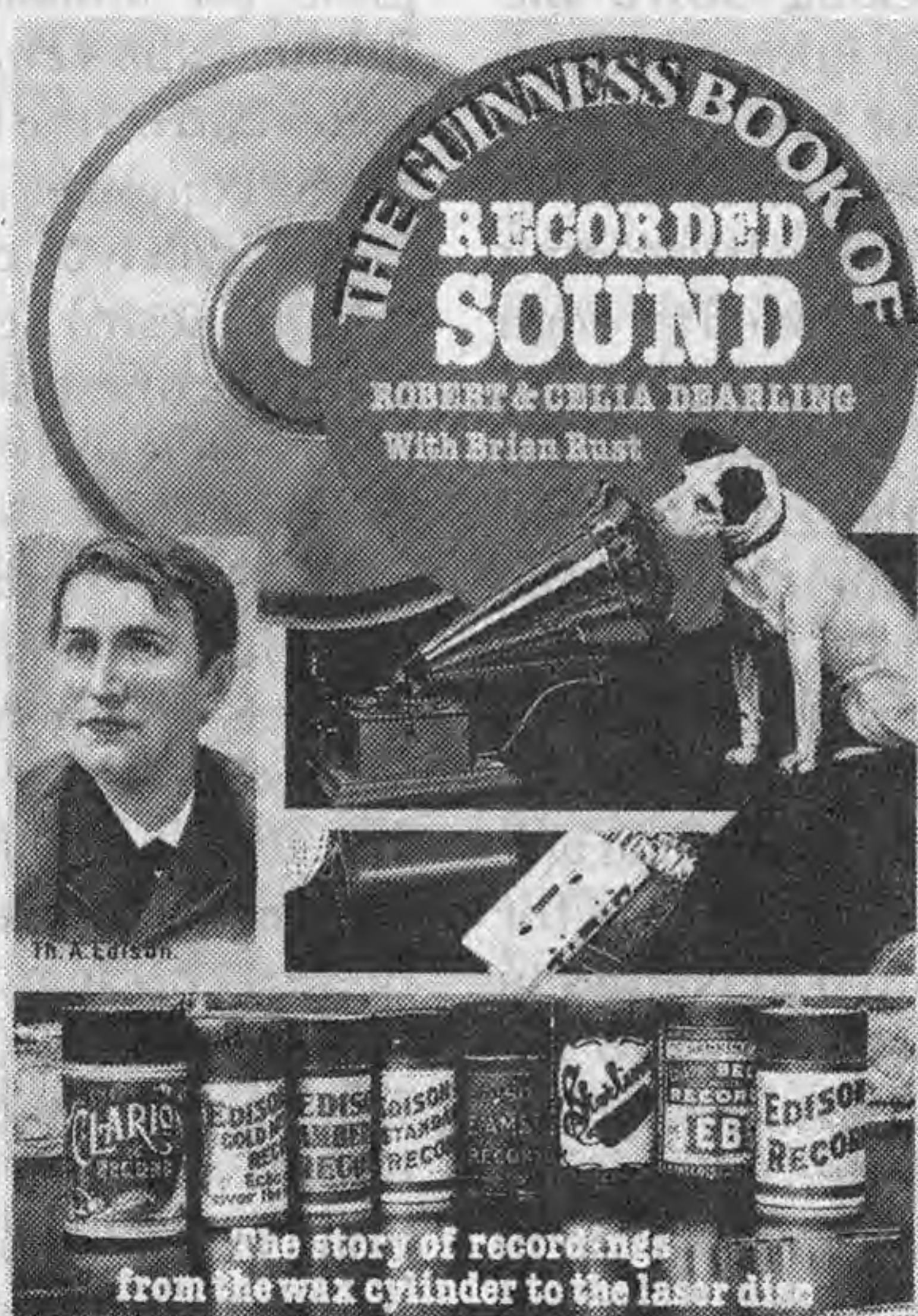
we could hear them! In the same year, live recordings were made by Col. Gouraud at London's Handel Festival of excerpts from *Israel in Egypt*. In 1889 Johannes Brahms recorded one of his own Hungarian Dances on a cylinder — the first big-name composer of concert music to put down his interpretation of his own music for posterity. (This has been found and re-released on lp). Also in 1889 Edison set up recording equipment at the Metropolitan Opera House and recorded

a concert, presumably with the Metropolitan Opera House Orchestra, conducted by Hans von Bulow, which included Richard Wagner's *Prelude to Die Meistersinger*, Beethoven's *Symphony # 3 in E flat "Eroica"* and a B-flat symphony of Franz Josef Haydn (the authors suggest that the # is 102). Quite a tantalizing menu. Well, you can just forget about tasting it. The recordings were never issued and nobody seems to know what became of them — shaved down in all probability (or mildewed) — and with them goes our sole opportunity to hear

von Bulow in a hefty program of substantial music. Considering what we know of Edison's early views on commercial musical taste, we shouldn't be surprised at this but it is lamentable just the same.

There is also a section devoted to many firsts drawn from the Edison North American Log Book (1889-1892) which is quite interesting, but the authors do not cite their references. Since the Log Book has been transcribed and published in only *one* place (Koenigsberg's *Edison Cylinder Records, 1889-1912*), it is certainly odd that the Guinness Book does not give the appropriate credit although the material is lifted verbatim.

The section on Berliner and the disc brings us to more common names in the recorded



AVAILABLE FROM YOUR BOOKSTORE OR APM



litany and even though much of the information may be common knowledge, it is good to have it set down in print that on January 21, 1896 tenor Ferruccio Giannini recorded "La donna e mobile" from *Rigoletto* for Berliner and thus began the field of operatic recording (at least on disc). Also according to Guinness, the first complete opera recording was made by G. & T. in 1903. It was Verdi's *Ernani* and was issued as a set of 40 single sided 10-inch records. Myself, I have doubts as just how complete a 40-side 10-inch *Ernani* could have been. Figuring at 3-4 minutes per ten-inch side, tops, that would make 120-160 minutes — 2+ hours — hardly long enough for a "complete" *Ernani*. I haven't had any luck tracking down the record numbers or any other information so who's to say where the error lies. Was it an incomplete recording or was it more than 40 ten-inchers? This is typical of the frustrating could-have-been questions sprinkled through this book like salt on an order of french fries.

Showcase sections are devoted to the major record companies (Pathe, EMI, Columbia, Victor) and to various members of the Hall of Fame (Caruso, Crosby, Sinatra and the Beatles) et al. Taking Caruso's Hall of Fame segment as an example (since Caruso is the subject we know more about than any of the others), we find an incorrect date for his debut at the Teatro Nuovo in Naples in *L'amico Francesco*. Guinness clings to the old date of November 16, 1894, perpetuating an error perpetrated by Pierre Key in his book on Caruso and by Dorothy Caruso in her biography of her late husband. Howard Greenfeld's *Caruso* has corrected the date to March 15, 1895 as having been established by Centro Studi Carusiani in Milano. Guinness also repeats the incorrect recording dates for Caruso's pre-Victor recordings rather than giving the corrected dates as established by Martin Sokol in *APM*, Vol. V, No. 4. The dates for the famed Caruso cylinders are horribly garbled and should be corrected to October 1903.

This book goes, according to the front dust cover, from the wax cylinder to the laser disc. On the back cover is a list of teaser questions that you can throw out at your next trivia game . . . The first square record? The first nature recording? But the date given for the first printed record catalog (1891 here) should be amended to 1889 or 1890 at the

latest (Columbia), depending on your definition.

This book is an interesting beginning for a field that cries out for "firsts", as recorded sound reflected so much of popular culture and history. But if another edition is contemplated, the numerous errors will have to be corrected.

On page 162 is a list of composers who recorded their own music and it goes all the way from Brahms to Bernstein. Under the name of Ruggiero Leoncavallo it is claimed that he conducted selections from his *Pagliacci*. This is not entirely correct. There was a series of recordings made in Milan, circa July 1907, which comprised a complete (or almost complete) recording of Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci*. Although the Victor issues had on the label the words "conducted by the composer," the entire series of recordings was, in fact, conducted by Carlo Sabajno while Maestro Leoncavallo sat by and supervised the operation. This series of recordings has been transferred to LP and reissued as the first three sides of Opal 826/7. The 21 sides of the "complete" *Pagliacci* (without a score for reference I wouldn't want to hazard a guess as to how "complete"), are not spliced together as this would only accentuate the fluctuations of pitch and speed between the beginnings and endings of these recordings. This is a technical flaw that was, apparently, inherent in the recording equipment of the day . . . (spring wound . . . weight driven . . . who knows). The fluctuations are minor, the distortion is no more than is to be expected in the days when they were still putting metal horns on violins to make them recordable and either replacing or reinforcing the string bass with the brass bass because the brass instrument recorded better under the acoustic system. The transferred sound is certainly cleaner than those one might find on 78 Victors of that vintage which have been played too often with steel needles and heavy pickups. Yet no attempt has been made to filter out surface noise to the extent where it would cut into the high end of the dynamic range. As for completeness all the major pieces seem to be there in order and there are 21 matrix numbers. Only 15 sides are listed in the 1911 Victor catalog I have in my possession and in the 1918 edition of *The Victrola Book of the Opera* two selections listed in 1911 had been deleted, or



at least not listed under *Pagliacci*. The back cover of the LP set states that these recordings have never before been issued complete in any one country and this complete set is currently housed within the Yale Collection of Historical Sound Recordings. If it's not completely complete these 21 sides certainly make up more than "selections" as they are called by the Guinness book. Regardless of whether or not these recordings represent the complete opera or not. . . they do not represent the complete number of selections recorded on this occasion. It was planned that the recordings which included Antonio Paoli, the fame Puerto Rican-born tenor, in the role of Canio would appear on the celebrity series. They were on Victor Red Seals and sold for \$2.00, ten-inch and \$3.00, twelve-inch. Those without Paoli were to be sold for lesser prices. The Black label American Victors went for \$.65 — ten-inch and \$1 — twelve-inch in 1911. By 1918 even the black label Victors went up to \$.75 and \$1.25 for 10 and 12-inch respectively. Duplicate recordings were made of those selections including Canio . . . Paoli for the higher priced items. . . the bargain series with Augusto Barbani. The Opal reissue includes the celebrity items with Paoli. . . not the lower priced remakes with Barbani. So today the tables are turned. The Paoli items are obtainable on reissue and the collectors' items. . . doubtless at collectors' prices. . . are those with Barbani. I must admit that I've never seen or heard the Barbani items and know of their existence only from the catalog listings. This, then, is my only disappointment with the reissue on Opal. Opal devotes the odd fourth side to a recital disk of Paoli 78's all previously available in perfectly acceptable transfers from Club 99 and O.A.S.I. I, for one, would rather have had access to the Barbani sides than have duplicates of seven items already in my Paoli collection.

Now, other than the imprimatur of the composer which is no guarantee of authenticity simply because Leoncavallo was subject to the same limits of time and sonic fidelity as was any other recording artist of 1907, what makes this recording so important is that these singers, while well known to record collectors, were not household words at the Met or Covent Garden. The Met didn't

need Paoli . . . they had Caruso. As a matter of fact Victor didn't need him either and his recording of Canio's best known aria, *Vesti la giubba* does not appear either in the 1911 catalog or the 1918 *Victrola Book of the Opera*. Very simply Victor didn't need it. . . they had Caruso's. John Steane's liner notes to the Opal reissue make mention of the fact that in early advertising for these records, it was pointed out to the prospective buyer that for slightly more expenditure he might deem it wise to purchase Caruso's recordings of Canio's two main arias when available. True, Paoli lacked the bel canto lyricism of Caruso but he was an important singer especially since he was a link between Tamagno to whom he was often compared and Caruso. The other singers on these recordings Gaetano Pini-Corsi, Ernesto Badini, Francesco Cigada, Giuseppe Roschi and especially Giuseppina Huguet were certainly not as famous (or important) as Farrar, Martinelli and Scotti but they sing their parts excellently and I guess it just goes to show that there were some excellent singers who didn't get to the Met or Covent Garden. The Orchestra and Chorus may not have been quite as excellent as the soloists but it is well to remember the conditions under which they were performing which might well have wilted the concentration and perfection of any but the greatest artists. It is also important to remember that the soloists were supposedly hand-picked, if not by Leoncavallo I'm sure he had some input to the decision, and one shouldn't really expect the fourth cellist in the orchestra or some basso in the chorus to be on a par with the Paolis and and the Huguets and Cigadas. Vocally this is as good a *Pagliacci* as you are likely to find on any recordings 78, LP or Laser Disc. I'm certain the composer's presence had a great deal to do with the quality of the performance. Yet, it had to be more than that. A recent recording of *West Side Story* supervised and conducted by the composer, Leonard Bernstein yielded results that at best could only be called variable. It took a certain style in a certain age to produce masterworks of this kind. Meanwhile all we can do is echo the sentiments of Canio . . . *La comedia e finita*, at least for now. □



## BOOK REVIEW

*Nellie Melba: A Contemporary Review*, By Wm. R. Moran,  
Greenwood Press, (491 pages), 1985, \$45.

Bruce I. Miller

When Dorothy Caruso wrote the classic portrait of her husband, *Enrico Caruso: His Life and Death*, she did so largely to set the record straight insofar as his personal qualities and his approach to his art were concerned. Legends, founded on half-truths or simply no facts at all, had grown into accepted truths which distorted the real story of the great tenor. While Mrs. Caruso's book contained pitfalls of its own, the inevitable result of her being too intimately involved with the subject to be thoroughly objective, it did reveal the artist in a more human, less exaggerated light. And particularly when primary material in the form of Caruso's letters was presented unadulterated, one sensed the true character of the man.

Dame Nellie Melba, who at one point held the supreme position among sopranos that Caruso did among tenors, had a similar larger-than-life reputation. But the biographies written of her have tended to reinforce and expand upon distortions rather than illuminate the truth. That these earlier works relied all too often on secondary sources, and even gossip, is demonstrated in this new "contemporary review" compiled by W. R. Moran.

Moran is familiar to the archival and collecting fraternities as a prolific discographer of exacting standards, principally for his work as co-author (with Ted Fagan) of the massive *Encyclopedic Discography of Victor Recordings*. His interest in that project grew out of his study of early operatic recordings. Here is additional fruit from his research, during which he became convinced that Melba had received less than adequate posthumous evaluation.

By compiling a reader rather than writing an entirely new biography, Moran has placed before us the primary evidence — Melba's own autobiographical sketch, her published writings on music, singing and an artist's life, her letters, the positive and negative criticism of her contemporaries, and personal reminiscences by those who knew her well. Thus, assuming that the articles included represent a fair sampling of the original sources (and the varied list gives one no reason to feel that the deck has been stacked),

we are allowed to form our own conclusions rather than be directly confronted with those of an intermediate author's.

While it is obvious that Moran is hardly neutral — he begins with the premise that Melba *has* been misrepresented and then presents the materials so as to reinforce his position — it is also obvious that his objective is the truth even if it should not be entirely flattering to Dame Nellie. We learn, for example, how the story of Melba's early vocal instruction under Signor Pietro Cecchi was, over time, almost completely forgotten. Most of the credit had gone to the famous Mathilda Marchesi; and while she retains her place as a significant influence in Melba's career, she turns out to be less a miracle worker and more a typical vocal coach than she otherwise had been thought to be. Cecchi's formerly worthless stock, in contrast, suddenly appreciates in value, and Melba herself emerges from all of this somewhat tarnished.

Confirmed also is a certain degree of Melba's paranoia (among prima donnas certainly not a unique phenomenon), and also her sometimes bizarre lapses of public behavior, which often had no other purpose than to publicize her latest appearance in opera or concert.

On the other hand, we discover that there was more to this lady than a cold, relentless drive coupled with a stereotypical prima donna's temperament. The Melba which emerges from these pages is a supremely intelligent woman who would have been successful at anything to which she cared to set her mind; a person devoted to her art, constantly re-evaluating and improving her performances; and a woman of principles who actively supported causes and persons in whom she believed (often quite privately). And she managed to maintain a generally happy existence, which must have really confounded her enemies.

Where Moran's survey is less than convincing is in its coverage of Melba's voice and technique. Describing voices of the past to those who never heard them except via imperfect recordings has never been easy, and in the selected articles we see the



expected problems - too much beating around the bush and overuse of metaphors. Although one essay by Moran himself does shed interesting light on the size of Melba's voice, nothing here compares with Michael Aspinall's "Nellie Melba and the 'Ideal Voice of Song,'" an absolutely direct and insightful analysis which was included in the liner notes for *Nellie Melba: The London Recordings* (EMI cat. #RLS 719).

While the entire book can be recommended to those interested in "Golden Age" singers, the fifty pages at the end devoted to discographical subjects will naturally be of special interest to many readers of APM. Those who missed Andrew Porter's *High Fidelity* review of the aforementioned EMI #RLS 719 will find it here, in all its opinionated erudition. And especially fascinating is John Brownlee's eyewitness account of Melba's final (electrical) recording.

Moran's extensively annotated discography will certainly prove useful, particularly as it gives playing speeds for all original issues, but it must be understood that in light of recent developments much of it is already in need of revision. Take the list of lp reissues, for example; while it covers the older reissues in careful detail, it lacks information on the new Rodgers and Hammerstein Archives release (R&H 100 - 1-6) — *The Mapleson Cylinders: 1900-1904, Complete Edition*, as well as a Japanese RCA reissue which was recently seen in the bins at Tower Records in New York.

It is particularly unfortunate that Moran either lacked access or didn't consult with the R & H people before putting his book to bed, for the new collection contains a heretofore unknown Melba item. The supplement on side 12, band 4 contains a *Lucia* excerpt, "Ardon gl'incensi", recorded March 18, 1901, which is not mentioned by Moran. It's one of the recently discovered cylinders from among private Mapleson family holdings, now on loan to the New York Public Library. Having no R&H number, it is identified only as Glacken #82 (an error) and as "M" #16. The R&H liner notes contain enough variants from previous listings, including those quoted by Moran, that people interested in accuracy will want to consult them and correct their Moran copies as necessary.

The Moran discography will undoubtedly also be found controversial in some quarters, especially in regard to the infamous Mapleson cylinder R&H #49. This is the *Huguenots* "A ce mot" excerpt which Moran attributes to Melba. but which others now ascribe to one of her colleagues, Suzanne

Adams. Since the evidence today is "inconclusive," to quote a prominent member of the Adams camp, Moran need not apologize for including it on his list — especially as he has taken great pains to outline the arguments and is careful to put a question mark next to his entry. (The R&H people could well have done the same).

Moran also disagrees with two portions of Bryan Crimp's 1976 discography in EMI's RLS 719: the numbering of some matrices in the March 1904 series and the dates of some of the 1910 recordings. His arguments concerning the 1904 items seem just as "speculative" as Crimp's; in the second case, he only says that there is "reason to believe," without naming any specifics, that some of the May 1910 recordings were done on the 12th instead of the 11th. In neither instance, while Moran's theories are interesting, is Crimp actually disproved.

One entry in Moran's list contains new, tantalizing information. His #87A is the song "Jean" by American composer Harry T. Burleigh, recorded 11 May 1910. Long considered a lost recording (even the title was unknown until the record showed up in a recent archival search), it was not, alas, made available for inclusion in Australian RCA's Melba collection of all extant American recordings (Cat #VRL5 0365, a set which also includes Melba's single extant French Gramophone Co. recording and - what else - the "A ce mot" Mapleson cylinder). Moran also informs us that a test pressing exists of the unpublished first take of the Melba-Kubelik "Ave Maria" duet, it likewise being in accessible to the public. Thus we learn that we can look forward, hopefully in the not-too-distant future, to hearing two "new" facets of Melba's recorded art.

Simply from the discographical aspect, the book is worth owning. Although most of the information has been available previously, Moran has combined the data into a clear, sequential format. As new information becomes available, penciling in corrections and additions should not prove difficult or inconvenient.

From a broader perspective, Moran must be credited with having achieved a major restoration. His book has the effect of scrubbing off accumulated historical claptrap which distorted our perception of a great artist, just as surely as decomposing varnish disfigures a renowned old painting - or the use of inaccurate equalization mars the reproduction of an old recording. However revisionist his position may be, Moran's efforts are compellingly presented and cannot be easily discounted. □



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### NOTICE

Next **Automated Music Shows** Sun., **Sept. 21, 1986** at Best Western Coachman Inn, Exit 136 Garden State Parkway, Cranford, NJ. Phonos, Music Boxes, etc. (8am-4pm). Lynn Bilton, Box 25007, Chicago, IL 60625. Or (312) 677-7455. Admission \$2 with this ad.

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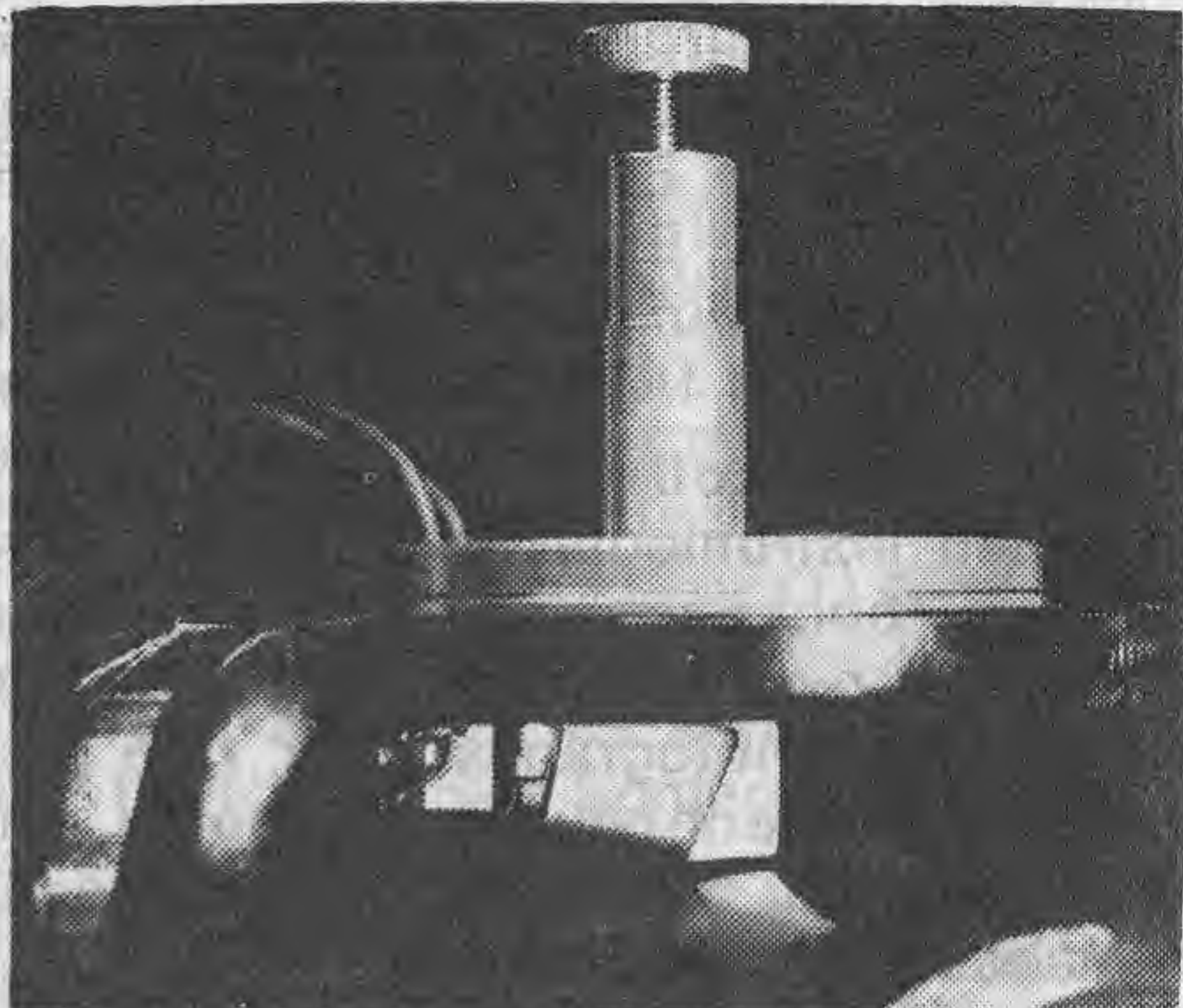
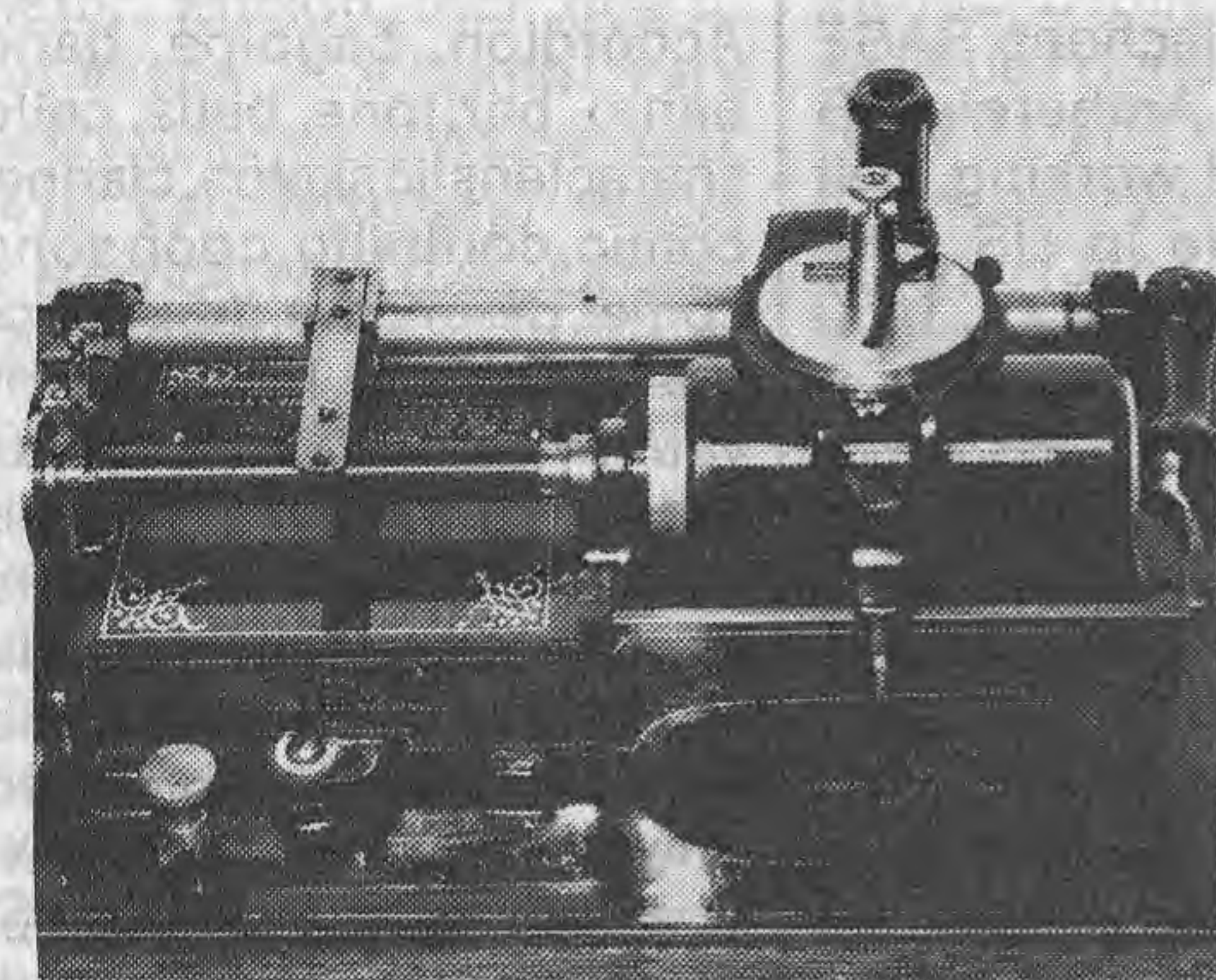
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Top prices paid for Mexican recordings by Teddy Stauffer and Japanese recordings by Weintraub Syncopators. Robert Masopust, Thiersteiner-allee 53, CH-4053 Basel, Switzerland

### RECORDS WANTED

Buying 78 rpm dance band, jazz, 1920-1935. Single records or collections. Send your sales/auction list. **Shellac Shack**, Box 32924, San Antonio, TX 78216. (IX-1)

Willard Robison - piano & vocal only. J.C. Flipper - Brunswicks. Charlie Palloy - Crowns. Send list, state cond. & price. Joe Lauro, 148 Sullivan St. #18, New York, NY 10012. (VIII-3)

Want cylinders, 78's or Edison DD's, containing xylophone, bells, or marimba bands, esp. those by George Hamilton Green. David Harvey, 263 Shaw St., Lowell, MA 01851. (VIII-3)

Want Blue Amberol cylinders by E.V. Stoneman. Dennis Devine, 722 E. Pierce St., Council Bluffs, IA 51501. Or (712) 323-5233. (VIII-3)

Info needed for record preservation project: Frank Daniels, Maurice Farkoa, Edward M. Favor, G.P. Huntley, Walter Jones, John McCloskey, Joseph C. Miron, Thomas Q. Seabrooke, Wm. H. Thompson, Bert Williams. Send for free want list. Jack Raymond, 3709 George Mason Dr., #1011, Falls Church, VA 22041.

Want Vogue Records: #'s R711, 713/711, 715, 716, 772, 748, 765, 786. Have Vogues to trade. W. L. Robbins, 10208 SW 53rd Ct., Cooper City, FL 33328. Or 1-(305) 434-6675, 7 to 10 pm EST.

Al Jolson on *Little Wonder* records. "Back to Carolina", etc. Richard P. de Fabio, 1946 St. Francis Ave., Niles, OH 44446. (VIII-9)

Up-tempo, sweet 78's, dance music 1930-35 on Victor and Columbia. Will buy collection of quality records. (408) 257-1589. Richard Threlkeld, 5532 Oak Park Dr., San Jose, CA 95129. (VIII-3)

### RECORDS WANTED

Want to buy Blue Amberol record #5199 or 5208 (*When the Red Red Robin Comes Bobbin'*, etc.). State price & cond. for one or both. Also interested in collecting Brunswick phono literature. Contact Don or Carolyn Montgomery, Box 176, Reydon, OK 73660. Or (405) 655-4661.

Wanted: Concert, Grand Opera Blue Amberols (28,000 series), Royal Purples. Craig Penfield, 100 Brentwood Rd., Newington, CT 06111. (VIII-6)

Need pre-grooved home recording discs and RCA 'full-tone' needles for Victor Talking Machine with Model 625 recording & reproducing head. Mrs. Joan Lehman, 1970 Temple School Rd., Dover, PA 17315.

The non-profit **Center for the Study of Filmed History** is currently preparing an archives of the Latin American conflict, 1890-1940. This material will be used in a documentary film. We are seeking copies of any original audio material from this period pertaining to U.S. political, commercial, military and popular views of Central America & the Caribbean. Speeches, old radio shows, popular music, travelogues, and industrials are all of interest. Please write: The Center for the Study of Filmed History, 165 W. 91st St., Apt. 14F, New York, NY 10024. Or (212) 222-5745. (VIII-3)

### PRINTED ITEMS FOR SALE

"Talking Machine Madness", the story of America's early phonograph shows (1878-1900), a 30-page book filled with cuts of machines, records, etc. Send \$4.50 to **Hamilton Hobby Press**, Box 455, Fairfield, OH 45014. We still have Unclue Josh books available, \$10. ea. (VIII-3)



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**New books available from Allen Koenigsberg:** **Time-Life Collectibles Encyclopedia**, Vol. P (Phonographs, etc.), color, \$13.95; **The Incredible Music Machine: 100 Glorious Years**, 287 pages, color, hardcover, \$24.95. **American Premium Record Guide**, 3rd ed. (1986), 380 pages, pictures 1200 labels, with prices of 60,000 records, \$16.95. **Collecting Nipper Souvenirs**, over 300 pages, illustrated, by Ruth Edge & Len Petts, only \$13.95. Write: Allen Koenigsberg, 502 E. 17th St., Brooklyn, NY 11226.

**A Discography of Historical Recordings on Cylinders & 78's**, by Brian Rust, 327 pp. This book is a must for any collector interested in historical recordings. Send \$45. check or money-order to: **Memory Machines**, Box 6884, Houston, TX 77265. I buy and sell historical recordings. What do you have, what do you need? (VIII-3)

## PRINTED ITEMS FOR SALE

**Who's Who in Antiques**, lists dealers, shows, auctions, periodicals, appraisers, organizations, etc. Only \$16.95 from Blue Bird Publishing, 1428 W. Broad Street, No. 202, Columbus, OH 43222.

**1987 Who's Buying & Selling Guide** matches buyers and sellers in many different hobbies, arranged by collectible. Written by Charles Culbertson. Latest edition available from **Shiloh Publishing Co.**, 302 N. New St., Staunton, VA 24401. Or (703) 885-2156. (VIII-3)

## PRINTED ITEMS WANTED

Old phonograph and record catalogs bought, sold & traded. Please write to **Tim Brooks**, 84-22M 264th St., Floral Park, NY 11001.

Wanted: Set of "Jazz, A to Z" by Brian Rust. Paul Pappas, RD 1, Box 465, Bernville, PA 19506. Or (215) 488-7177.

Please Help! I need the following Edison *New Phonograms*: July 1904; March, June, Oct., Nov. 1905; June 1906; July 1909; Nov., Dec., 1912. Also Berliner & Zonophone reproducer and hardware wanted. Charlie Stewart, 900 Grandview Ave., Reno, NV 89503. (VIII-4)

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Plastic binders and folders for protecting paper antiques. Send for free catalog to **20th Century Plastics**, P.O. Box 30022, Los Angeles, CA 90030.

## MISCELLANEOUS FOR SALE

**Sheet Music**, all categories (SASE for details). Want lists welcomed (have helped many). Wholesale lots bought; travel to purchase. **The McCall Archive**, 444 East 10th St., Suite 147, New York, NY 10009. (VIII-9)

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Send names (address & zip) and your wants, for sales and auctions, all types records, memorabilia, ragtime, Edisonia, piano rolls, to **Nostalgia**, Dept AK, Regina Pl. & Harriet Dr., Whippany, NJ 07981-1906. Seeking videos of same categories, also radio, early TV, esp. Arthur Godfrey.

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Need 16-note paper rolls for Q.R.S. Play-a-Sax (Clarola) miniature Saxophone. Can you help me find? Information is appreciated. Joan Lehman, 1970 Temple School Rd., Dover, PA 17315. (VIII-3)

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